MARVEL COMICS
2099
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2099 A.D.
XI'AN
JOINS THE
THEATRE
OF PAIN
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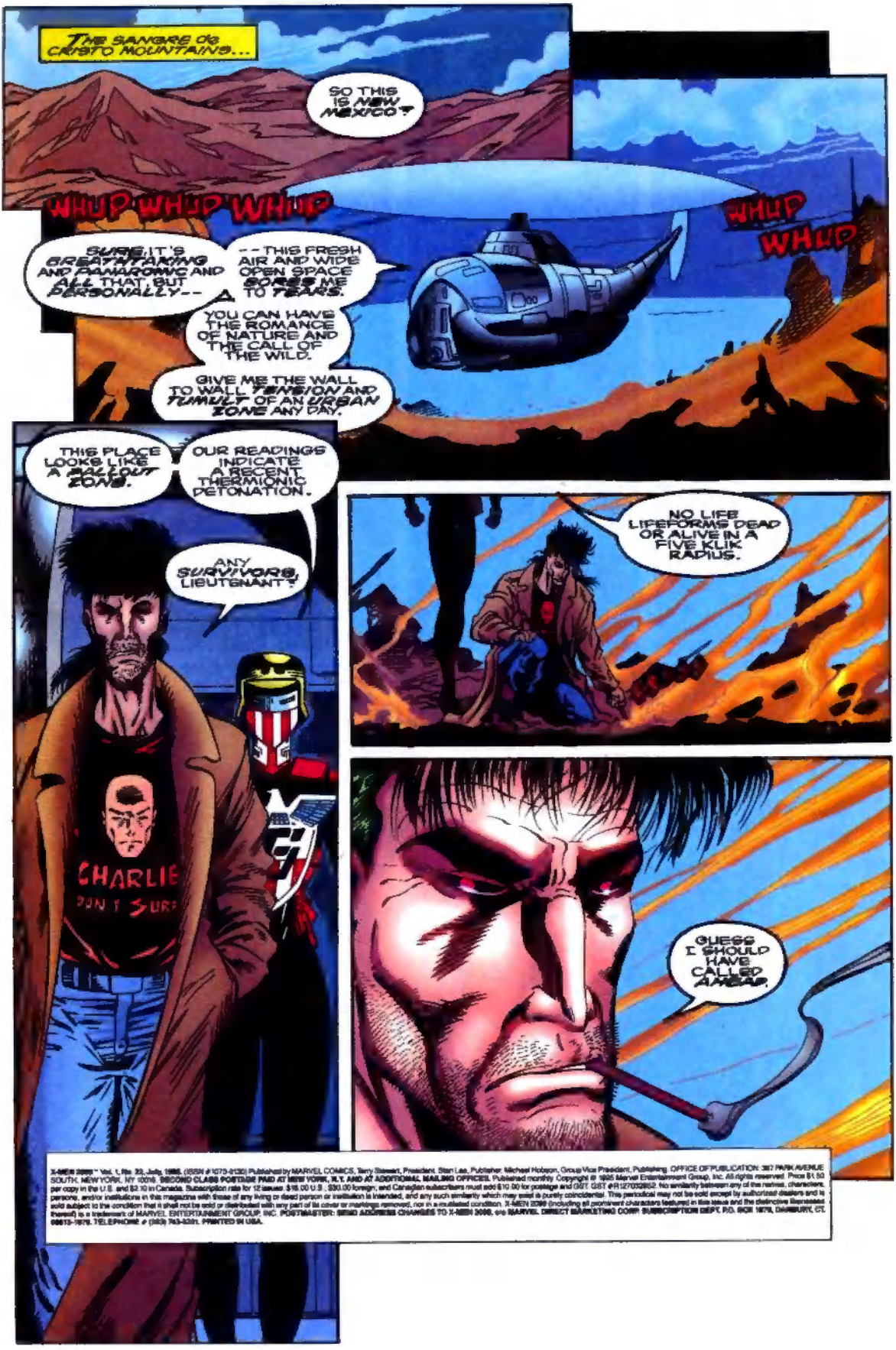
$1.50 US $1.95 CAN


THE SANGRE DE CRISTO MOUNTAINS...
SO THIS IS NEW MEXICO?
WHUP WHUP WHUP
WHUP WHUP
SURE, IT'S GREAT! TAKING AND PANAROMIC AND ALL THAT, BUT PERSONALLY--
--THIS FRESH AIR AND WIDE OPEN SPACE BORES ME TO TEARS.
YOU CAN HAVE THE ROMANCE OF NATURE AND THE CALL OF THE WILD.
GIVE ME THE WALL TO WALL TENSION AND TUMULT OF AN URBAN ZONE ANY DAY.
THIS PLACE LOOKS LIKE A FALLOUT ZONE.
OUR READINGS INDICATE A RECENT THERMIONIC DETONATION.
ANY SURVIVORS, LIEUTENANT?
CHARLIE
DON'T SURF
NO LIFE LIFEFORMS DEAD OR ALIVE IN A FIVE KLIK RADIUS.
GUESS I SHOULD HAVE CALLED AHEAD.

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--FOR I BRIMSTONE LOVE, PROMISE YOU THIS, XI'AN--
--ONCE YOU ARE INITIATED INTO THE EXQUISITE MYSTERIES AND DARK TRUTHS OF THE THEATRE OF PAIN--
--YOU WILL EMERGE TRANSFORMED.
IF YOU SURVIVE.
THE INNER CIRCLE AWAITS.
GAUNTLET OF PAIN!
FRONT ROW CENTER WITH
JOHN FRANCIS MOORE--WRITER
RON LIM--PENCILER
HARRY CANDELARIO--INKER
KEN LOPEZ & JANICE CHIANG--LETTERERS
TOM SMITH--COLORIST
JOEY CAVALIERI--STAGE MANAGER
BOBBIE CHASE--EXECUTIVE PRODUCER
THE WOLF PACK WITH
SALVADOR MANCHA--COMPUTER COLOR

ASPEN.
ONE OF BRIMSTONE'S THEATRICAL FLOURISHES.
HE DIDN'T SET ME ON FIRE, HE TELEPORTED ME.
BUT WHERE?
I KNOW THIS PLACE. I GREW UP HERE.
IT'S WORSE THAN I REMEMBER.
WHAT SORT OF MIND GAME IS BRIMSTONE TRYING TO PLAY?
THE MUTT-TOWN PLAGUE CLEARED OUT MOST OF THE CITY IN '90--
--BUT SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME FROM INSIDE THAT STOREFRONT.
KLANKL KLANKL
IS THAT YOU, BRIMSTONE?
SHWHAAAP
URK.
YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION, KETCHUP MAN!

VROO VROO VROO VROO
THAT WAS ALWAYS YOUR PROBLEM, MEATRAG.
YOU WISH, MONKEYBOY.
--'CAUSE YOU CAN'T PULL THAT ICE COLD ATTITUDE ON ME.
I REMEMBER.
YOU WERE ALWAYS DAYDREAMING.
CHAINLINK?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD.
I WAS THERE WHEN YOU WERE NOTHING BUT AN EMBARRASSMENT TO YOUR PARENTS, REMEMBER?
DADDY! MOMMY! PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME LEAVE!
I WANT TO STAY WITH YOU!
PEACEFUL GROVE GENETIC LABS

WHAT DID THEY TELL YOU?
YOU'D BE BETTER OFF?
HAH! WHAT A JOKE!
KLA
NG
YES...
I'M SORRY, SON. YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND--
--HAVING A MUTANT SON LOOKS BAD FOR A MAN IN MY POSITION.
YOU'LL BE BETTER OFF WITH PEOPLE WHO KNOW HOW TO CARE FOR YOU.
THIS IS NOT GOOD. CHAINLINK'S PLAYING ME LIKE I'M THIRTEEN AGAIN--
GOT ME ON THE DEFENSIVE--
--AND THESE BLASTED MEMORIES ARE DISTRACTING ME.
GET IN, KID. CHOICE YOU AIN'T GOT. YOU'RE GOING TO THE GROVE WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT.
YOU'LL GET USED TO IT. EVERYONE'S A FREAK SAME AS YOU.
I'M NOT A FREAK.
I'M NOT!
YOU WERE GREEN, SHAGGYDOG. YOU'D BEEN KEPT FROM THE HARSH REALITIES OF THE REAL WORLD.
TOUGH WAY TO FIND OUT LIFE ISN'T FAIR, IT'S COLD AND UNFORGIVING.
I'LL SHOW THEM WHO'S A FREAK.
AND WHEN I COME BACK, THEY'LL ALL BE SORRY.

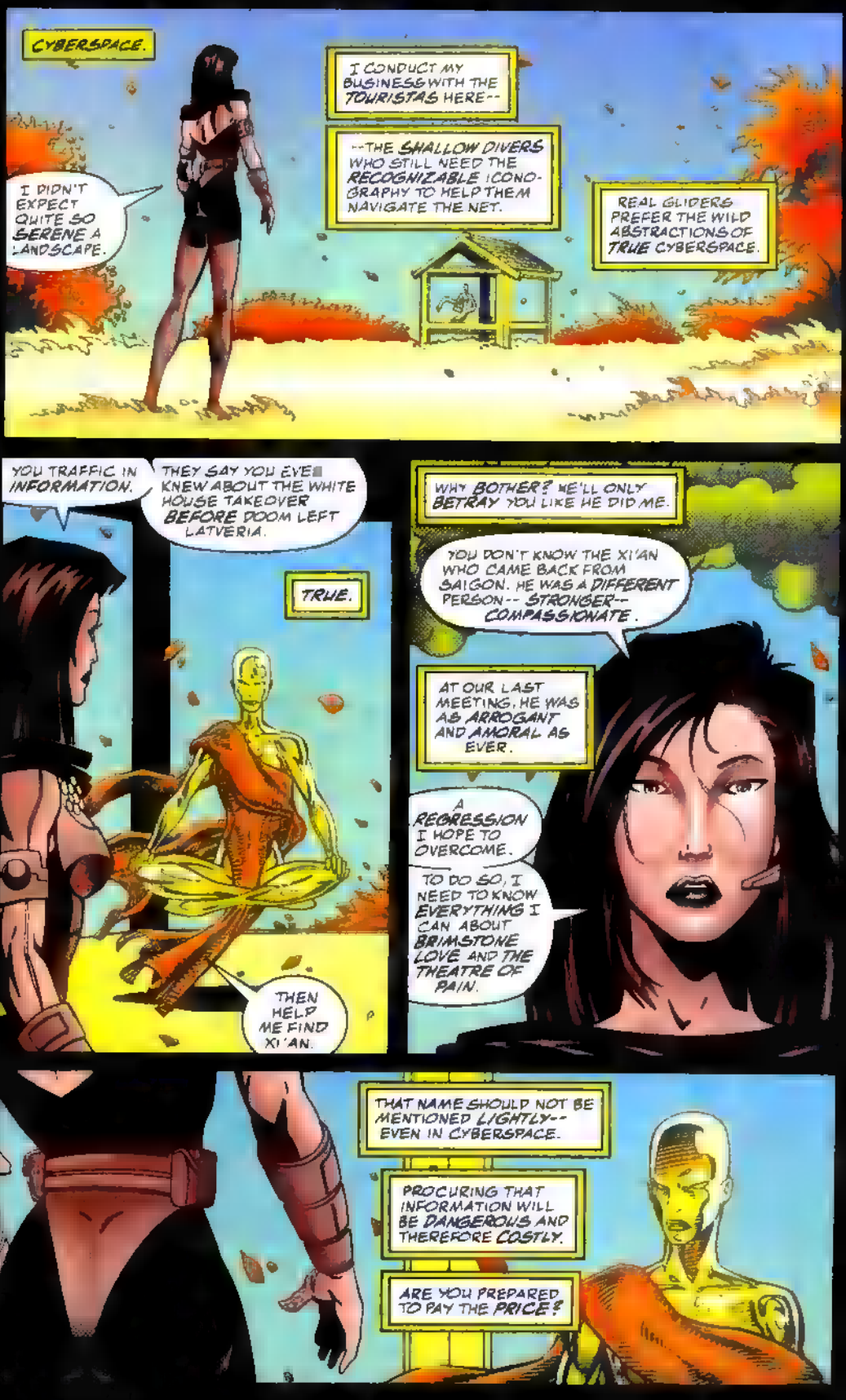
K-CHANG
NOGALES.
TELEPORTED AGAIN. GOTTA SHAKE THIS WEIRD BUZZING IN MY HEAD.
FOCUS ON MY SURROUND--
OH NO... GEARBOX!
THERE'S STILL A BOUNTY ON YOUR HEAD, XI'A CH'XAN--
GOOD LORD-- I'M IN THE GLASS EYE CANTINA-- JUST LIKE FIVE YEARS AGO.
THAT CRAZY BOUNTY HUNTER'S FOUND US!
KRASH
THOUGHT WE LOST HIM IN PHOENIX, VICTOR.
THIS 'BORG DOESN'T KNOW WHEN TO QUIT, HAIKU.
--AND I'M HERE TO COLLECT WITH INTEREST.
VRRRR
THIS TRACKER HASN'T SLOWED WITH AGE, HE'S FAST AS EVER.
FOR CRIMES AGAINST THE ELYSIUM BIOMEDICAL CORPORATION AND THEIR SUBSIDIARIES--
-I HAVE BEEN AUTHORIZED TO BRING YOU IN DEAD AND/OR ALIVE.
KABOOM!
HAIKU!
YOU ESCAPED ONCE-- BUT NOT THIS TIME.
I HAVE A REPUTATION TO UPHOLD.

NO WAY MY TASERBLADES GONNA DAMAGE THAT CLOWN'S REWIRED NERVOUS SYSTEM.
UNLESS YOU'VE GOT A IMPULSE CANNON, TEN EAGLES, WE'VE GOT TO MAKE TRACKS.
KCHOW KCHOW
WHAT ABOUT HAIKU? SHE TOOK MOST OF GEARBOX'S FIRST SALVO.
SHE'S NOT MOVING AT ALL.
CAN'T THINK STRAIGHT-- PAST AND PRESENT ARE BLURRING TOGETH-- ;JARRR!---
ATTEMPT TO USE YOUR DISRUPTIVE TOUCH ON ME XI'AN, AND I WILL SLICE YOUR ARM OFF.
I GET PAID WHETHER I BRING YOU IN ONE PIECE OR TWENTY.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN-- I GAVE HER?
DOES HAIKU MEAN ANYTHING TO YOU, XI'AN? SHE'S PRACTICALLY YOUR..
IF WE STAY WE DIE.
YOU CAN'T GET SENTIMENTAL IN SITUATIONS LIKE THESE.
SH-BLAM!
CRUELTY I KNOW. YOU UNDERSTAND.
BRIMSTONE, I KNOW YOU'RE WATCHING-- WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS TO ME? WHYYYYYY...
SKLITCH!
BLOOD HAS BEEN DRAWN.
THE STING OF THE PAST BECOMES THE PAIN OF THE PRESENT.
STILL, IT IS TOO SOON TO CONCLUDE THIS NOSTALGIC REVUE.-
--AND SO, TO THE NEXT SCENE.

DEATH VALLEY, CALIFORNIA.
FLOODGATE BIO RESOURCE PROCESSING CENTER
ALL INCOMING SUBJECTS MUST PROCEED TO THE WHITE ROOM FOR INITIAL EXAMINATION AND EVALUATION.
AFTER YOUR RESOURCE POTENTIAL HAS BEEN CLASSIFIED, YOU WILL BE GIVEN COLOR CODED ARMBANDS FOR IDENTIFICATION AND SECTOR TRANSFER.
REDS WILL GO TO GENETICS. BLUES TO RESEARCH. GREENS TO LABOR. YELLOW TO ENTERTAINMENT. BLACK TO RECYCLING.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.
Y'KNOW WHAT I HEARD THEY REALLY CALL THIS JOINT?
THE SLAUGHTER-HOUSE.
I WANT OUT, SHAM. I DON'T CARE ANYMORE ABOUT THE FOOD CREDITS THEY PROMISED US.
DOWNSHIFT, QUIVER. IF THESE MEDTECH'S TRY ANYTHING WEIRD, WE'LL DO THE FADE.
THEY'RE GONNA SLICE AND DICE US. I KNOW IT.
DEEP BREATH, QUIV. DON'T GO SEISMIC ON ME.
I CAN'T HELP IT. I'M SCARED.

FAHWOOOOM
LET ME OUT OF HERE!
QUIVER!
DON'T RABBIT--
THERE'S NOWHERE TO--
SSZZZRAKK
UNFF--
THAT FELT LIKE A SONIC BOOM. WHAT'D THE KID HAVE ON HIM, A CONCUSSION GRENADE?
WOULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN PAST THE WEAPON DETECTOR AT THE GATE.
CALL THE LAB. LOOKS LIKE WE TAGGED ANOTHER MUTANT.
DON'T DO IT.
YOU'LL ONLY WIND UP BODYBAGGED LIKE QUIVER.
WHATEVER YOU DO, GIRL--
--DON'T USE YOUR POWER.

EL PASO
DO I HAVE TO REMIND YOU THAT XI'AN LEFT THE BOMB THAT DESTROYED THE COMPOUND?
IF SHAKTI HADN'T COME TO AND HIT THE ALARM, WE'D ALL BE DEAD.
FACE IT, XI'AN MADE HIS CHOICE. HE'S WITH THE THEATRE NOW.
EL MERCADO
HE DOESN'T DESERVE OUR HELP.
YOU WERE PART OF THE THEATRE ONCE, LUNA. YOU BROKE AWAY FROM THEIR CONTROL.
LET'S GIVE XI'AN THE SAME CHANCE.
BEFORE WE CAN DETERMINE WHETHER OR NOT XI'AN IS BEYOND REDEMPTION--
--WE HAVE TO FIND HIM.
A MOST SAVORY BLEND.
YOU ARE A MASTER BREWSMITH, ULYSSES.
COMING FROM JAVA JUNKIES LIKE YOU, THAT IS HIGH PRAISE INDEED.
X-MEN 2099 #19.--JOEY
EXCUSE ME, MY COMPANIONS AND I WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK TO THE OWNER OF THIS ESTABLISHMENT.
NO GO, SISTER. SHE DOESN'T DO WALK-INS
TELL HER THIS ISN'T A REQUEST--
LUNA, PLEASE.
YOU WANNA RUMBLE, SNOW WHITE, THEN COME ON. ULYSSES RENALDO COLOSIO IS NOT AFRAID OF YOU.
I UNDERSTAND YOUR CAUTION, BUT THERE IS NO NEED FOR VIOLENCE.
PLEASE INFORM HAIKU THAT SHAKTI HADDAD IS HERE TO DISCUSS XI'AN CHI XAN.


CYBERSPACE.
I DIDN'T EXPECT QUITE SO SERENE A LANDSCAPE.
I CONDUCT MY BUSINESS WITH THE TOURISTAS HERE--
--THE SHALLOW DIVERS WHO STILL NEED THE RECOGNIZABLE ICONOGRAPHY TO HELP THEM NAVIGATE THE NET.
REAL GLIDERS PREFER THE WILD ABSTRACTIONS OF TRUE CYBERSPACE.
YOU TRAFFIC IN INFORMATION.
THEY SAY YOU EVE KNEW ABOUT THE WHITE HOUSE TAKEOVER BEFORE DOOM LEFT LATVERIA.
TRUE.
THEN HELP ME FIND XI'AN.
WHY BOTHER? HE'LL ONLY BETRAY YOU LIKE HE DID ME.
YOU DON'T KNOW THE XI'AN WHO CAME BACK FROM SAIGON. HE WAS A DIFFERENT PERSON-- STRONGER-- COMPASSIONATE.
AT OUR LAST MEETING, HE WAS AS ARROGANT AND AMORAL AS EVER.
A REGRESSION I HOPE TO OVERCOME.
TO DO SO, I NEED TO KNOW EVERYTHING I CAN ABOUT BRIMSTONE LOVE AND THE THEATRE OF PAIN.
THAT NAME SHOULD NOT BE MENTIONED LIGHTLY-- EVEN IN CYBERSPACE.
PROCURING THAT INFORMATION WILL BE DANGEROUS AND THEREFORE COSTLY.
ARE YOU PREPARED TO PAY THE PRICE?

SAIGON.
ALL I KNOW, EVERYWHERE [redacted]MSTONE'S SENT ME, I'VE FACED A SPECTER FROM MY PAST--
SIDE'S [redacted]ING--
LEG'S NUMB--
MIND'S PLAYING TRICKS ON ME--
TOO MUCH HAPPENING AT ONCE--CAN'T THINK!
--CHAINLINK IN ASPEN, GEARBOX IN NOGALES.
IF I'M IN SAIGON--
NO. HE CAN'T BE HERE--I KILLED HIM.
A LITTLE THING LIKE A MORTAL WOUND COULDN'T KEEP ME IN THE GRAVE, XI'AN. QUICKBEAM CAME BACK FROM THE [redacted]EAD JUST TO MAKE THIS RENDEZVOUS.
FWAK!
LET ME TELL YOU, IT'S COLD ON THE OTHER SIDE.
CAN'T LET THE CARTEL FIND ME, JIMMY. THEY THINK I SCREWED THEM OUT OF THE STARK-FUJIKAWA HARDWARE.
THE AMERICAN CYBERNOSTRA HAS NO JURISDICTION IN VIETNAM.
DON'T WORRY--THE PARK'S BEEN CLOSED FOR YEARS.
YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE WHILE I ARRANGE A NEW IDENTITY FOR--
TIME [redacted] WHEN YOU'RE SIX FEET UNDER, XI'AN.
SO BECAUSE ME, I'VE BEE[redacted] ABLE TO PLAN THIS MOMENT IN DETAIL.
YOU WON'T GO EASY, XI'AN. THE ONLY THING THAT DE[redacted] LIFE IS THE PAIN.
ZZRRK
JIMMY?
YOU DON'T HAVE TIME TO MOURN FOR YOUR FRIEND, WHELP.
YOUR TIME IS UP.
CAN BARELY MOVE... EVERYTHING HURTS.
TELEPORTING... ONCE MORE...

THE NUEVO SOL ARCOLOGY.
CLIP CLOP
CLIP CLOP
CLIP CLOP
BACK IN THE ARC...
YOU ARE ONE SORRY SIGHT, BOY.
I EXPECTED BETTER OF YOU.
NOAN SYNGE? THE GATES OF HADES MUST BE WIDE OPEN.
QUIT YER WHININ', XI'AN. YOU'RE NO STAR ANYMORE...
NOBODY'S CHEERIN', HANGIN' ONTO THAT LOAD OF MOGWASH YOU USED TO SPEW FROM THIS STAGE...
XI'AN
XI'AN
XI'AN
XI'AN
XI'AN
XI'AN
XI'AN
XI'AN
WHY AM I HERE?
BECAUSE YOU DELUDED YOURSELF INTO THINKING YOU WERE THE ONE TIME SUCCESSOR TO XAVIER AND MAGNUS.
MAN! THOSE WERE REAL MUTANTS--WORTHY OF RESPECT AND FEAR. THEY COUNTED FOR SOMETHING.
YOU COUNT FOR NOTHING.

YOU BOTH PERFORMED WITH COMMENDABLE *ELAN*.
PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY, WE HAVE LED *XI'AN CHI XAN* TO THE EDGE OF *DESPAIR*.
THE MUTANT'S MIND IS *FRAGMENTED* AND *WEAKENED* BY HIS OWN INNER CONFLICTS.
IT WAS SIMPLE THEN TO USE MY *PSI-TALENTS* TO EXTRACT THOSE MOMENTS OF PHYSICAL DANGER AND EMOTIONAL VULNERABILITY.
AND EASIER STILL TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE THAT THE SWEET AND DEMURE *FELICITY* WAS EACH OF HIS *ANTAGONISTS*--
--RETURNED FROM THE PAST TO ABUSE HIM FURTHER.
HE IS A STRONG FIGHTER. HE DIDN'T FALL UNTIL THE VERY *END*.
GIVE HIM TO ME AND I WILL MAKE HIM THE MOST *VICIOUS* OF THE THEATRE'S *BLOODFIGHTERS*.
NO. WE SHALL NOT WASTE XI'AN CHI XAN IN THE DEATHSPORT OF THE *SPLATTERPITS*.
HE HAS A *WILD* AND *CRUEL* SIDE THAT GOES BEYOND MERE *PHYSICAL* VIOLENCE.
YOU MAY LEAVE NOW, FELICITY AND CHARON.
THE INITIATE IS *BROKEN*.
NOW WE SHALL *REBUILD* HIM IN OUR IMAGE.

BAM BAM
BAM
LET ME OUT! I'M NOT DEAD!
CAN'T YOU HEAR ME?
I'M
NOT
DEAD.
NEED A HAND?
YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I NEVER WENT AWAY.
LET ME HELP YOU FIGHT BRIMSTONE LOVE.
GIVE YOU CONTROL AGAIN, YOU SANCTIMONIOUS DO-GOODER?
NEVER.

SOUTHERN ARIZONA.
AND WHERE WERE THE OTHER MUTANTS?
SCATTERED TO THE WIND.
SO MUCH FOR THE UNIFIED STRENGTH OF THE SO-CALLED X-MEN.
AT LEAST WE MANAGED TO SCRAPE THIS ONE OUT OF THAT BLAGGED GARAGE.
AND YOU BELIEVE THIS ONE WILL SERVE OUR NEEDS?
AFTER A LITTLE ATTITUDE ADJUSTMENT, YEAH.
WHOOOSH
OF COURSE, WE STILL HAVE TO PUT HIM BACK TOGETHER.
THEN BY ALL MEANS, MORPHINE SOMERS, REASSEMBLE THE TIN MAN.
NEXT: AGENT OF SHIELD